

**VOLUNTEER
TRUSTEES**
of
**NOT-FOR-PROFIT
HOSPITALS**

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**VOLUNTEER TRUSTEES VOTES TO SUPPORT PATIENT
PROTECTION LEGISLATION**

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The Board of Directors of Volunteer Trustees of Not-for-Profit Hospitals has voted unanimously in support of federal "patient protection" legislation. "We concluded that a patient bill of rights that set reasonable national standards for managed care would be in the public interest," said Shelton Weber, Chairman of Volunteer Trustees, a national organization of not-for-profit hospital governing boards representing more than 150 hospitals and health systems. "As trustees of community hospitals we have a responsibility to consider the needs of our patients above all," he said.

The Board spent several hours discussing the issue and debating the merits of federal legislation which is currently being debated in Congress. The vote in support of reasonable patient protection legislation to establish patient rights in managed care was unanimous even as many of the health systems represented are gearing up to enter the managed care business under new PSO legislation and through other venues. "They felt this was simply the right thing to do," said Linda Miller, President of Volunteer Trustees. She noted that the Board believes there are certain basic, reasonable standards that all managed care plans should have to meet regardless of cost, profitability, or other economic considerations. "This issue is about trust," she said. "These standards define a level of decency and humanity that all managed care patients have a right to expect." She listed as examples of such standards: reimbursement for appropriate emergency room use, access to necessary specialists, adequate provider networks, and complete disclosure of information and policies.

Among the issues the Board considered in its deliberations was whether federal standards were necessary, especially since most not-for-profit plans already incorporate many of the "rights" being considered by Congress. The Board concluded that universal standards would help level the playing field by requiring the same basic behaviors of everyone, for-profit and not-for-profit alike. "Plans will have to subscribe to these standards for Medicare and Medicaid patients in any case. Making standards universal will simply assure that all patients will be protected by the same set of rules," Miller said.

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